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Plenary sitting

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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on recent attacks and abductions by Da'esh in the Middle East, notably of Assyrians
(2015/2599(RSP))

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European Parliament resolution on recent attacks and abductions by Da'esh in the Middle East, notably of Assyrians (2015/2599(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Iraq and Syria, in particular to its resolutions of 12 February 2015 on the humanitarian crisis in Iraq and Syria, in particular in the IS context and of 18 September 2014 on the situation in Iraq and Syria and the ISIS offensive,
- having regard to the 17 February 2015 Statement by the UN High Commissioner for human rights,
- having regard to the 16 February 2015 UN Security Council Press Statement on Murder of 21 Egyptians,
- having regard to the 28 February 2015 Amnesty International Report 2014/15: Middle East and North Africa Regional Overview, in particular the paragraph on Da'esh violence, including targeting of religious and ethnic minorities,
- having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas on 29 June 2014 the IS proclaimed a ‘caliphate’ or ‘Islamic State’ in the territories under its control in Iraq and Syria; whereas its leader, Abdu Bakr al Baghdadi, has been declared caliph; whereas the IS now controls a third of Iraq and Syria with a population living in an area of 250,000 square kilometres and it wishes to extend its ‘caliphate’; whereas the transnational character of the so-called Islamic State, with significant financial resources and around 200,000 fighters according to some sources poses a threat to the wider region; whereas thousands of foreigners including EU citizens are estimated to be fighting with these armed groups; whereas the upsurge of the IS has aggravated the humanitarian crisis, notably with a massive displacement of civilians; A. whereas there are 3.6 million people living in areas controlled by IS, 2.2 million of which are in urgent need of aid, and who are particularly difficult to access; whereas over 150,000 vulnerable Iraqi refugees are currently residing in neighbouring countries, notably Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon;

B. whereas the IS is being accused by the UN of committing ‘mass atrocities’ and war crimes; whereas it has also been accused by human rights organisations of the ethnic cleansing of minority groups in northern Iraq;

C. whereas it is estimated that up to 40,000 Assyrians lived in Syria - alongside the overall Christian population of 1.2 million - before the civil war in 2011; whereas the Assyrians have been under increasing pressure since IS captured large parts of the country and some 1,000 local Assyrian families are believed to have fled their homes in the wake of the abductions;

D. whereas on 23rd February, the IS launched an offensive on a 40km front along the River Khabour in Hassaka Governorate in north-eastern Syria, an area in which there are around 35 predominantly Christian villages, mainly Assyrians; whereas during this offensive hundreds of civilians were abducted, believed to be held in Mount Abdelaziz or other areas under IS control;

E. whereas it has been reported that, because of this offensive, thousands of Assyrian families have fled the area and that there have been at least 15 casualties, principally among Assyrian combatants fighting alongside Kurdish militias in defence of their areas; whereas, according to reports, on 25 February two historic churches had been burned down in villages captured by IS - one in Tal Hurmiz and the other in Qaber Shamiya;

F. whereas, as a response, a U.S.-led alliance launched air strikes against Islamic State fighters near the town of Tel Tamr;

G. whereas it is reported by Assyrian Christian officials that on the 1st of March 2015, 19 of the abducted Assyrians, 16 men and 3 women were liberated; whereas it is also reported that the captives gained their freedom after a Sharia court ordered them to pay an unspecified amount of money levied as a tax on non-Muslims;

H. whereas, according to the press, Assyrian leaders are trying to negotiate with IS to secure the release of the remaining captives;

I. whereas, according to sources, religious minorities have been increasingly targeted in post al-Gaddafi Libya, and have been subjected to abductions, torture and other ill-treatment, and unlawful killings, particularly in Benghazi and Sirte; whereas abductions of civilians on account of their origin, identity or activities, have become commonplace in Libya;

J. whereas since the end of the 2011 armed conflict, Sirte has become a stronghold of Islamist armed groups; whereas in November 2014, a Libyan armed group declared its allegiance to the IS and announced the establishing of the Tripoli Province, which includes several cities in the west of the country, including Sirte, Tripoli, Misratah and Zawiya;

K. whereas on Saturday 7th March 2015 Boko Haram pledged allegiance to IS in an audio message reported to be from its leader Abubakar Shekau; whereas having thousands of fighters and some parts of northeastern Nigeria under its control, Boko Haram is believed to be the largest jihadi group to pledge fidelity to the Islamic State; whereas, as it is reported, the following day troops from Niger and Chad launched ground and air raids against Boko Haram into Nigeria and the operation is still continuing;

L. whereas in mid February 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians beheaded in Libya by the self-described Tripoli Province of Islamic State; whereas those 21 persons had been previously abducted in two different raids in the city of Sirte, on 29/12/2014 and 03/01/2015 respectively;

M. whereas after Tripoli Province of Islamic State released the relevant video, Egypt's military carried out airstrikes against IS militants in Libya as a response to the killings;

N. whereas the IS is believed to be holding some hundreds of foreign hostages, with that

number having significantly increased after the massive abduction of the Assyrians;

O. whereas on the 6th of March the Iraqi Government informed on that IS assaulted the ancient city of Nimrud and bulldozed it with heavy machinery, appropriating the archaeological attractions dating back 13 centuries BC;

P. whereas this comes after the release on the 26th of February by IS of a video showing them toppling statues and carvings from plinths in the Mosul museum and smashing them with sledgehammers and drills, it also showed damage to a huge statue of a bull at the Nergal gate into the city of Nineveh; whereas in February Unesco has expressed concern over "one of the most devastating acts of destruction of library collections in human history"; whereas, the cultural destruction by IS involves museums, libraries and universities across Mosul and other cities and regions;

Q. whereas the IS is currently the terrorist group with the greatest economic resources, having secured significant income sources by taking over important oil fields in Syria, by looting banks and businesses on territories it controls, by the sale of antiquities, ransom for kidnappings and funds placed in operational safe havens from donors, particularly from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates; whereas IS has looted much US military equipment from the Iraq military and can easily buy high-quality weapons on international armaments markets; whereas Russia has recently announced a legally binding initiative in the framework of the UN Security Council to put pressure on countries to cut off the cash flow to Islamic State;

R. whereas the disintegration of the Iraqi-Syrian border, motivated by the conflict in both countries, has provided the IS with opportunities to enhance its presence in both countries;

S. whereas according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) IS has established unlawful so-called "sharia courts" in the territory under its control that have been carrying out cruel and inhuman punishments against men, women and children; whereas according to a report by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, boys are being trained as child soldiers, girls are being sold as sex slaves and hundreds of others have been tortured and executed by IS;

T. whereas, to finance its activities, IS is stealing artefacts from Syria and Iraq and send them to Europe to be sold; whereas it is estimated that IS raises US\$200 million a year from cultural looting and UNESCO has asked for United Nations Security Council controls on the sale of antiquities, similar to those imposed after the 2003 Iraq War;

U. whereas on August 2014 the US started to carry airstrikes targeted the IS in Iraq; whereas at the NATO meeting of 5 September 2014 and "anti-IS" coalition was formed which includes French, British, Danish, Canadian and Australian airstrikes; whereas in November 2014 US President Obama announced the doubling of the US ground presence inside Iraq, whereas on December 2014 the US Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs authorised US military force against IS, whereas on 15 January 2015 it was reported that over 16,000 air strikes were carried out in Iraq, around 60% by the US Air Force;

V. whereas these airstrikes against IS began also in Syria on 22 September 2014 by the US and were joined by forces of Arab League countries such as Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar and

United Arab Emirates; whereas the US-led air strikes against IS and fighting between government troops and opposition groups have also accounted for large numbers of death and displacements;

W. whereas in February 2015 IS was pushed out by Kurdish forces supported by US airstrikes of the Syrian Kurdish city of Kobane in Turkish border after a four-month siege, whereas Kurdish forces have retaken control of around 50 surrounding villages;

X. whereas the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated on 8 February 2015 that the US-led invasion of Iraq was a mistake and helped to create the Islamic State, as "the aim of creating democracy without the existing institutions ushered in corrupt sectarian governments, the country has been unstable ever since and this has proved the perfect breeding ground for Sunni radical Muslims, who have become affiliated with the Islamic State",

Z. whereas the Iraqi government that followed the invasion has behaved causing social discontent and religious extremism, which was boosted and financed in Syria by the same Western powers seeking a change regime; whereas Qatar and Saudi Arabia have provided weapons to Sunni rebel groups and Turkey has allowed Sunni fighters, including jihadists from al-Qaeda and the IS, to cross its border into Syria;

1. Condemns in the strongest possible terms the murders, the kidnappings, the displacements and the other systematic violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law resulting from the terrorist acts perpetrated by the so-called Islamic State, which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity;

2. Deeply regrets the killings, the abductions and the torture of civilians by IS and expresses its condolences to the families of the victims as well as its solidarity to those in captivity;

3. Calls for the immediate, safe and unconditional release of all those who are kept hostage by IS; Stresses the need for those responsible for all type of violations of international humanitarian law or violations and abuses of human rights law to be held to account through appropriate mechanisms;

4. Strongly condemns the destruction of cultural heritage and all appalling actions of "cultural cleansing";

5. Calls on the EU and the Member States to assure that no stolen artefacts or looted art items from Syria, Iraq or anywhere else are sold in Europe by the IS;

6. Is extremely concerned at the deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in Iraq and Syria as a result of the occupation of significant parts of their territory by IS as well as in other parts in countries of the region where IS operates; Expresses its deep concern on the possible operational cooperation and exchange of methodologies between the IS and other terrorist groups; including Boko Haram;

7. Warns against the risk of going down the path of religious war; underlines, nevertheless, the fact that Muslim authorities reject the IS as neither Islamic nor a state and have

condemned it, considering its actions to be violations of the principles of Islam and a threat to Islam and Muslims across the world; is convinced that the strategy against terrorism cannot be faced as a fight between civilizations or religions leading to racist and xenophobic presumptions;

8. Expresses serious concern about the severe lack of funding for the UN Appeals 2014, which resulted in a temporary suspension of World Food Program assistance to Syrian refugees; therefore urges on the international community to step up its funding and assistance in response to the forthcoming appeals;

9. Emphasizes the need to strengthen international cooperation in order to provide humanitarian assistance and aid to all people displaced by IS offensive to ensure that basic needs are met and to alleviate suffering caused by this violence; encourages the Council, the Commission and the High Representative to make all necessary financial and human resources available to assist the refugees;

10. Calls for the EU to boost international support to the increased numbers of refugees who risk their lives in open vessels to flee to Europe and calls for asylum and support to be granted to them;

11. Welcomes the liberation of the city of Kobane; supports the Iraqi and Syrian states and the Kurdish forces in their fight against IS terrorism; emphasises the fact that the security response needs to be combined with a sustainable political solution involving all the components of society in each case and addressing their legitimate demands;

12. Reiterates that in the fight against the IS, human rights and international humanitarian law must be respected; calls on the Governments of Iraq and Syria to take the necessary measures to provide for the security and protection of the people of their countries; including the most vulnerable groups as children and women; recalls their obligations applicable to them under international law related to the protection of journalist, media professionals and associated personnel engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict; calls for special protection to be granted most vulnerable groups in conflict, as children, women, old and disabled people, as well as ethnic and religious minorities or LGBTBI people;

13. Expresses deep concern at the increasing number of cases of recruitment of children and young people in Iraq and Syria; recalls the need to particularly protect children and women affected by armed conflict;

14. Believes that mechanisms are required to stop the financing of terrorism through off-shores involving states and financial institutions, as well as to stop the arms trafficking and the buying and selling of energy resources and raw materials benefitting terrorist groups; therefore, calls, in particular on the EU Member States themselves and Western countries, to stop financing any militia and, in particular, to stop buying oil from oil fields controlled by the IS;

15. Stresses the fact that the conflict has been exacerbated by the arms trade and the supply of weapons; is highly critical of the role that the various Western interventions of in recent years have played in fostering the radicalisation of individuals, especially in the Middle East and in southern neighbourhood countries; stresses that such policies are promoting, not countering,

terrorism and therefore should be abandoned;

16. Is convinced that the US led invasion of Iraq and the foreign interference in Syria's internal affairs have served as the breeding ground for the appearance and spread of the IS appearance; deplores the role played in particular by the US, the Member States, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Israel; recalls the responsibility that those countries bear in the promotion of this conflict and calls them particularly to alleviate the suffering of people affected by violence and to grant asylum to refugees;

17. Denounces NATO's attempt to replace the pacification and stabilisation tasks, condemns all actions taken outside the UN auspices, such as the US led Coalition against IS, and recalls that such tasks can only be implemented by broad consensus in the framework of the UN General Assembly;

18. Is convinced that a solution can be found only through coordination with Iraqi and Syrian non-sectarian governments for eradicating the causes of terrorism; believes that the full respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states such as Iraq, Syria and Libya as well as the respect of multicultural character and democratic principles in these societies is the only guarantee of avoiding the spill-over of the IS and further suffering to their populations;

19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Council, the President of the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Head of Delegation in Iraq, the presidents of the parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Council of Representatives of the Republic of Iraq, the Government and Parliament of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean and the League of Arab States.